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ENG 3062-001: Intermediate Poetry Writing

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ENGLISH 3062: INTERMEDIATE POETRY WRITING
FALL 2015
3 CREDIT HOURS

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Office Hours: MW 12:30-3
and by appointment.

Course Information:
MW 3-4:15
Room: CH 3159
Section 001



REQUIRED TEXTS AND MATERIALS

- *The Poet's Companion: A Guide to the Pleasures of Writing Poetry* edited by Kim Addonizio and Dorianne Laux
- *Poetry: A Pocket Anthology*, 7th Edition, Edited by R.S. Gwynn. (Bring to every class.)
- *The Alchemy of My Mortal Form* by Sandy Longhorn (\$15)
- Course Packet with additional readings from Charleston Copy X, 219 Lincoln Ave.
- A writer's notebook of your choice. (Bring to every class.)
- Three-ring binder or folder to keep all of the poems and handouts.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Poet Richard Wilbur once remarked that “whatever margins the page might offer have nothing to do with the form of a poem.” In this intermediate course centered on the writing of poetry, we will accept Wilbur’s challenge and learn the variety of ways we can give shape to our lyrical expressions. We will practice writing poems in different modes and forms, from the oral poetry of the ancient Greeks to performance poetry of today. Other modes and forms will include the sonnet, syllabics, and freeverse. How one varies these forms and makes them expressive will be both the challenge and the pleasure of the class.

Since part of the writing process is the revision process, workshop will play a fundamental role in our course. In workshop, our poems will be read, critiqued, and evaluated with the goal of a polished manuscript being presented by the semester's end.

We will also keep regular writing notebooks where we will begin poems and hone our craft. In addition to improving our writing skills, this course will provide opportunities to interact with some of the assigned poets, thus exposing us to the vibrant world of contemporary poetry.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

A. Students will develop skills of craft analysis by discussing, reading and writing poetry. B. Students will produce and revise original creative writing in the poetry genre. C. Students will learn to read, discuss, and identify their work in the context of a poetic tradition. D. Students will hone their ability to critique poetry in a creative writing workshop. E. Students will participate effectively in a reading of their poetry produced for this course.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Nine poems will be submitted to the class over the course of the semester. Starting our fifth week, one poem will be submitted to the class Mondays (with one or two exceptions designated in the syllabus). The following Wednesday, we will workshop a few of these poems. Please use a standard font such as Times and in the right hand corner include your name, the date, and "Poem #." Many weeks, we will be writing poems from assignments that I provide based on the class's needs and interests.

A writer's notebook is key to the writing process and a requirement for this course. Most weeks, I will provide writing exercises. Some of them will be turned in for workshop and some of them will not be. All of the writing exercises will stretch your creativity and help you practice craft elements that can be used for later poems. We will also write in class together, so always bring the notebook to class. Most writers I know carry a notebook with them at all times to record images, bits of dialogue, poem ideas, etc., so this is a good habit to acquire. I encourage all of you to try to write at least six lines a day in this notebook since a writer is simply one who writes often. I will collect these notebooks twice during the semester and grade based on completed exercises and regular entries.

In addition to the writing exercises, I also ask that you do six one-page responses (three before the mid-term and three after) to a poem that has been assigned. Within the 300-350 word response, do not comment on if you liked or didn't like the work. Instead, comment on an element of craft and how the poet is using it in the poem of your choice. For example, you might want to track the use of the "s" sound and what tonal effect that gave the poem. Or, you might want to comment on an interesting metaphor that added a few layers of

"Ends are what define poetry. Line breaks. Mortality. If you want middles, go read a novel. If you want happy endings, go read a cook book." —Dean Young

development. Another example might be to look at the line unit. If short, how did the short lines alter your reading of the poem? As you can see by the examples, the idea here is to look at how the poem is built so that you might be able to apply the same techniques to your work. This is a common practice among writers. To gain the most from this assignment, it is key that you do the analysis before coming to class. (Models are provided in the back of your course packet.)

Reading and writing assignments will be our way to learn about the craft of writing. In order for the class to be both challenging and organic, I will assign many of our readings and writing assignments on a weekly basis. So, check in with your D2L email regularly and be aware that it is your responsibility to keep up with the assignments not only listed in the syllabus but on D2L as well. I also may include a few pop quizzes if I do not feel as if the class is keeping up with the reading. These quiz grades will be factored into the participation portion of your final grade.

Finding a community is important for writers, partly because the work itself is often done in isolation. Therefore, **participation in two literary events** is required. You can choose from a variety of readings in Champaign-Urbana, weekly open mics at the Jac downtown, or the readings listed in your syllabus. For each event, submit a **response about the poetry reading** the first class day after that reading. In this response, comment on the experience of the reading itself. How did the poet's portrayal of his/her work affect your reception of the poem? What poems left an impression and why? What are the benefits or drawbacks from sharing poems in a public setting? These are just a few examples of what you might want to discuss. Word count: 200-300 words.

Workshops will encompass half of the in-class work that we will do. We will divide our class into two or three groups (to be determined once we know class size) to make the workshops more in-depth. For each workshop, you are required to write editing and revision suggestions on each poem before class. If you are not being workshopped that week, you only need to turn in one copy of your weekly poem to me. If you are being workshopped, you will need to bring copies for every person in the class. No emailed workshop poems will be allowed.

We will discuss proper workshop etiquette in class, but the general guideline is to braid together honesty, specificity, and kindness since one without the others will not serve the writer. Also keep in mind that poems for workshop should have undergone at least two to three revisions before bringing them to us for suggestions. Not everything you write will be wonderful and not everything you write will be horrible. These are the extremes. What is more likely is that you will write poems that are somewhere in between—and we will help each other move the poems in the direction the poem wants to be moved.

A mid-term will consist of two components: submitting your writing journals and beginning the revision process for the final portfolio. Seeing as how our final requires six revised poems, it is a good idea to get started on those revisions. So, the midterm asks you to revise and submit three poems for consideration to our school's journal *The Vehicle* or another

national undergraduate journal such as *Grub Street*. Simply bring me proof of your submission.

A final manuscript of your poems will be submitted for the **final exam**. The manuscript needs to be submitted in a black paper folder (no three-ring binders). Within this manuscript, include—in this order—a title page, an epigraph, a table of contents, six poems that you have heavily revised followed by the poems that you submitted throughout the semester with my comments on them. For the six revised poems, I would like the original submitted poem placed directly behind it so that I can see how extensive the revisions are. The majority of the final manuscript's grade stems from the seriousness of revision. Also include the poem that you memorized in this final manuscript. (If you quote from a poem, be sure to cite it appropriately with footnotes and quote poetry lines according to MLA guidelines.) Please note: it is your responsibility to keep your work throughout the semester.

In addition to the above material, also include a 2-3 page critical introduction on what you wanted to revise, why, and how you went about the process with three of the six revised poems. In this reflection, be sure to explain how you came to decide what needed to be revised and why. Also, be sure to note how your revision strategies were specifically tailored to your poem's needs.

*"Beauty plus pity—that is the closest we can get to a definition of art."
—Vladimir Nabokov*

Participation is critical in this course. The time we spend together is our opportunity to expand our views on what is poetry, to build a writer's community, and to learn the craft behind the art. In *Mystery and Manners*, fiction writer Flannery O'Connor reflects on the value of writers interacting with one another. She says that unless the writer "has gone utterly out of his mind, his aim is still communication, and communication suggests talking inside a community." At the end of the semester when I reflect on your participation, I will consider not only how often you contributed to class discussions, but the quality of those comments. I will also consider your seriousness with in-class writing assignments, and any pop-quizzes if given, in the participation grade as well. One of the more challenging aspects to writers is being able to shut off the world in order to write. Therefore, we will practice mindfulness in class. Text messaging (even once) and other distractions such as checking email in class (again, even once) will result in a failing participation grade for the semester. Since cultivating a supportive and challenging writers' community is critical to our growth as writers, participation counts as 20% of your grade.

Attendance, punctuality, and meeting deadlines are all part of the writing life. There are days you may not want to write, but writers write—when they feel inspired or not. Coming to class is part of your obligation to your creativity and to your writing community. To help build a writers' community, the course depends upon everyone's participation and attendance. Therefore, missing four courses will lower your final grade by five points. Five absences will lower your final grade by ten points. Six absences will result in failure of the course. To allow adequate time for class discussion and in-class writing, arrive on time. Being

late twice (or leaving early twice) will be considered an absence. This attendance policy applies to all students regardless of the reason for the absence. The only exception will be school-sanctioned events for which I receive prior notice, in writing, from a university administrator. Finally, if you arrive without the day's reading in front of you, you will be counted as absent.

Also, I do not accept **late work** which includes occasions when you are absent. If you must be absent, you may email me your work before the class to receive credit for it. Also, if you miss a day that you are workshopped, you will simply miss your workshop. (Twenty-five points will also be deducted from your participation grade for each missed workshop.) The reason for this strict policy on not accepting late work is to help build discipline as writers. Procrastination can be the creative killer to writers, so I am trying to take the option of "later" off the table.

A memorized poem of your choice (of at least ten lines) will be recited to the class. This is going to be a spontaneous event, so whenever you are ready and feel moved by the poetic spirit, recite to us your poem with full gusto. I would recommend you do it early, so you can enjoy the show.

"A poem is an event, not the record of an event."
—Robert Lowell

GRADING

Assignments are proportioned as follows:

Nine weekly poems	(10%)
Writer's Notebook Pre-Midterm	(10%)
Writer's Notebook Post-Midterm	(10%)
Mid-Term Exam	(5%)
Analysis of attended poetry readings (Submit first class day after the reading)	(5%)
Class Participation, which may include pop quizzes	(20%)
Final Manuscript/Final Exam	(40%)

The final manuscript grade will include the following:

Six revised poems: 200 points (33.33 points each poem)

Presentation of manuscript: 30 points

Past weekly poems with my comments: 20 points (2 points each)

Memorized poem: 50 points

Critical Introduction: 100 points

Grading scale is as follows:

A = 90-100 B = 80-89 C = 70-79 D = 60-69 F = 0-59

UNIVERSITY POLICIES

Academic integrity

Students are expected to maintain principles of academic integrity and conduct as defined in EIU's Code of Conduct (<http://www.eiu.edu/judicial/studentconductcode.php>). Violations will be reported to the Office of Student Standards.

Plagiarism is a serious offense and will be dealt with according to university policy, which can be found on the Office of Judicial Affairs pages. First offense will be referred to the Office of Judicial Affairs and **will result in a grade of F** for this class. I think we all know what plagiarism is by now: the willful “appropriation or imitation of the language, ideas, and/or thoughts of another author, and representation of them as one’s original work” (from *Random House Dictionary of the English Language*). In sum, do your job, which means do your own work.

Students with disabilities

If you are a student with a documented disability in need of accommodations to fully participate in this class, please contact the Office of Student Disability Services (OSDS). All accommodations must be approved through OSDS. Please stop by Ninth Street Hall, Room 2006, or call 217-581-6583.

The Student Success Center

Students who are having difficulty achieving their academic goals are encouraged to contact the Student Success Center (www.eiu.edu/~success) for assistance with time management, test taking, note taking, avoiding procrastination, setting goals, and other skills to support academic achievement. The Student Success Center provides individualized consultations. To make an appointment, call 217-581-6696, or go to 9th Street Hall, Room 1302.

“Poetry is a verbal means to a nonverbal source.”
—A.R. Ammons from *A Poem is Walk*

RECOMMENDED TEXTS AND SUPPLEMENTARY SOURCES

- Various anthologies that compile what is being published right now such as *The Best American Poetry* series, Pushcart anthologies, and *Best New Poets* series.
- Anthologies that compile work by our important poets. Some of my favorites include:
 - *Strong Measures*, an anthology of poems in received form with explanations
 - *Poetry 180* edited by Billy Collins
 - *Contemporary American Poetry* edited by A. Poulin, Jr.
 - *Vintage Book of Contemporary World Poetry*
 - *Poet's Choice* by Edward Hirsch, a collection of 130 poets from all over the world with Hirsch's reflections on each poem.
- *A Poetry Handbook* by Mary Oliver for craft
- *Writing Down the Bones* by Natalie Goldberg for warm-up exercises
- *Poet's Guide* by Michael J. Bugeja for publishing and performance guidelines
- *The Art of the Poetic Line* by James Logenbach and any book in this series by Graywolf

- *The Triggering Town* by Richard Hugo for craft and workshop discussions
- *Neruda and Vallejo* translated by Robert Bly and James Wright
- *Blood Dazzler* by Patricia Smith
- *The Late Hour* by Mark Strand
- *Otherwise* by Jane Kenyon
- *Hum* by Jamaal May
- *Given Sugar, Given Salt* by Jane Hirshfield
- *Above the River* by James Wright
- *Neon Vernacular* by Yusef Komunyakaa
- *Embryo* by Dean Young
- *What the Living Do* by Marie Howe
- *Life on Mars* by Tracy K. Smith
- *Rare Earth* by Bradford Tice
- *The Smallest Muscle in the Human Body* by Alberto Ríos
- *Beowulf* translated by Seamus Heaney
- *Region of Unlikeness* by Jorie Graham
- *The Girlhood Book of Prairie Myths* by Sandy Longhorn
- *The Rose* by Lee Young-Li
- *The Niagara River* by Kay Ryan
- *Lighthouse's Guide to the Galaxy* by Terrance Hayes
- Poetry Web sites such as Academy of American Poetry, Poetry Daily, Poetry Foundation, Verse Daily, and The Writer's Almanac.
- Literary journals such as *Fence*, *Bluestem* (national journal based out of EIU), *Missouri review*, *Ninth Letter*, *Ploughshares*, *Prairie Schooner*, *Rhino*, *Southern Review*, and *Tin House*.
- Online journals such as *Best New Poems Online*, *Blackbird*, *Diagram*, and *Typo*.

COURSE SYLLABUS

Please note that the following syllabus may be altered and that additional assignments will appear on D2L. I will email to your D2L account when I post these assignments. Be sure to check both the syllabus and your D2L email for each class.

(I will refer to *The Poet's Companion* as "P.C." in the following assignments.)

FOCUS: INTRODUCTION TO POETRY

WEEK ONE

Monday 8/24: Introduction to class.

Wednesday 8/26: **Reading due:** Mary Oliver "The Black Walnut Tree," Simon Ortiz "Serenity in Stones," (both from anthology), begin reading the anthology's introduction (pp. 1-9), and read this syllabus.
In-class writing and discussion on concrete language.

FOCUS: CONCRETE LANGUAGE AND DISCOVERY

WEEK TWO

- Monday 8/31: **Reading and writing due:** “Writing and Knowing” pp. 19-29 from P.C. and read all of the “Ideas for Writing” at the end of the chapter and choose one exercise to do. Write this exercise in your writer’s notebook.
Other writing due: Complete the poem begun on Wednesday in your notebook. Be sure to label this so that I can find it during the mid-term check.
More reading: Finish introduction to our anthology (1-18) and poems by James Wright, Sharon Olds, and Yusef Komunyakaa.
- Wednesday 9/2: **Writing due:** Prose paragraph. Assignment on D2L.
In-class critique of prose paragraphs.
Reminder: Have you done a craft analysis in your notebook lately?

FOCUS: MORE ON CONCRETE LANGUAGE AND DISCOVERY

WEEK THREE

- Monday 9/7 **NO CLASS: LABOR DAY HOLIDAY**
- Wednesday 9/9: **Reading due:** Selections from *The Great Fires* by Jack Gilbert. (Course Pack)
Continued discussion in-class on specificity and unexpectedness.
Writing due: Choose two exercises from “The Shadow” chapter and do them in your writer’s notebook.
Assign workshop groups

FOCUS: FREEVERSE

WEEK FOUR

- Monday 9/14: **Reading due:** Doty on Whitman (Course Pack), Mark Strand (Course Pack), and from your anthology Kooser’s “Abandoned Farmhouse,” Brian Turner’s “Here Bullet,” all of Lucille Clifton, and Walt Whitman’s “Song of Myself” excerpts from the anthology.
Writing due: Do exercise 2 on page 53 of P.C. in your notebook.
- Wednesday 9/16: **Reading due:** Selected poems by our guest poets. (Course Pack)
Discuss workshop etiquette and process
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FOCUS: IMAGES

WEEK FIVE

Monday 9/21:

Poem due: House Poem

Reading and writing due: Read chapter on “Images” from P.C. and do exercise #3 in your notebook.

Reminder: Have you done a craft analysis in your notebook lately?

READING TONIGHT!: Wyn Cooper & Matt Minicucci, 7 p.m. @ Doudna’s Recital Hall

Wednesday 9/23: Poetry Workshop for Group ____

FOCUS: LINE BREAKS (ACCENTUAL AND SYLLABIC FORMS)

WEEK SIX

Monday 9/28:

Poem due: Metaphor Poem (Assignment on D2L)

Reading and writing due: Read “Music of the Line” in P.C. and do one exercise of your choice from the end of the chapter.

More reading: Selected poems by Terrance Hayes, Robert Morgan, N. Scott Momaday, and May Swenson (All Course Pack)

Reminder: Have you done a craft analysis in your notebook lately?

Wednesday 9/30: Poetry Workshop for Group ____

FOCUS: REPETITION AS FORM

WEEK SEVEN

Monday 10/5:

Poem due: Accentual or Syllabics (Assignment on D2L)

Reading due: “Repetition, Rhythm, and Blues” and “More Repetition” in P.C.; Bishop’s “One Art;” Dylan Thomas’s “Do Not Go Gentle...”; Collins’s “Paradelle for Susan” (pp. 334), Sarah Cortez (pp. 367), and Julia Alvarez (pp. 385) in anthology

Wednesday 10/7: TBA

FOCUS: MID-TERM AND REFLECTION ON THE SEMESTER

WEEK EIGHT

Monday 10/12:

Poem due: Pantoum, Sestina, or Villanelle

Poetry Workshop for Group ____

Wednesday 10/14:

Writer’s Notebook due

Mid-Term Exam: Submit 3 poems to *The Vehicle* and provide proof

Poetry Workshop for Group ____

FOCUS: PERSONA

WEEK NINE

Monday 10/19: **No poem due this week**
Reading due: 1st half of Sandy Longhorn's book

READING TONIGHT!: Sandy Longhorn, 5 p.m. @ Bob's Bookstore downtown

Wednesday 10/21: **Reading due:** Second half of Sandy Longhorn's book

FOCUS: PERSONA PROJECTS

WEEK TEN

Monday 10/26: **Work due:** New Poet's Bio and Persona Questionnaire (Assignment on D2L)
Reading due: Excerpts from *Imaginary Poets Project* (course pack)
Arrive prepared to recite one favorite line from one of these poems.

Wednesday 10/28: **Work and Poem due:** Revised bio and one persona poem. Bring 4 copies. Also bring computers or phone for research purposes.
Small Group Workshop (Note: these are not your usual groups.)

FOCUS: PERSONA PROJECTS COMPLETED

WEEK ELEVEN

Monday 11/2: **Poem due:** One Persona Poem of Your Choice
Poetry Workshop for Group ____

Wednesday 11/4: Poetry Workshop for Group ____

FOCUS: SONNETS

WEEK TWELVE

Monday 11/9: **Reading due:** "Sonnet 18" and "Winter" by Shakespeare; Donne "Holy Sonnet 10" and "Holy Sonnet 14"; Wordsworth "It Is a Beauteous Evening"; Cummings "pity this busy..."; Jarman "After Disappointment"; and Wright "Saint Judas" from your anthology.
Writing due: In your notebook, do the rhyming exercise posted on D2L.
Reminder: Have you done a craft analysis in your notebook lately?

Wednesday 11/11: **Poem due:** Sonnet. Feel free to revise a previous poem into a sonnet or start from scratch. (Assignment on D2L)
Poetry Workshop for Group ____

FOCUS: SONNETS CONTINUED/SPOKEN WORD

WEEK THIRTEEN

Monday 11/16: Poetry Workshop for Group ____
Reading due: Chelsea Rathburn (course pack)
Writing due: Do the writing exercise on page 249 of P.C. titled
“Talking to God.”
Reminder: Have you done a craft analysis in your notebook lately?

Wednesday 11/18: Reading and viewing due:
Amiri Baraka: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7ziRjhAgTO8>
Patricia Smith: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=91L4LxFBxQE>
Hedwig Gorski: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oYhTEMnSroI>
Anna Blackmore: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NaXAYY_OLM0
Sam Sax: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sTRdBWeBlJs>

FOCUS: READ FOR PLEASURE AND EAT REAL FOOD

WEEK FOURTEEN

Monday 11/23: NO CLASS: THANKSGIVING

Wednesday 11/25: NO CLASS: THANKSGIVING

FOCUS: SPOKEN WORD

WEEK FIFTEEN

Monday 11/30: **Poem due for Group __:** Poem Performed and Workshopped

Wednesday 12/2: **Poem due for Group __:** Poem Performed and Workshopped

FOCUS: REVISION

WEEK SIXTEEN

Monday 12/7 **Revised Poem Due** (bring 5 copies)—see instructions
on D2L under “Revision Assignment”
In-class small group workshop of revised poems
Writer’s Notebook due

Wednesday 12/9 Class Reading! Location: TBA

Final Exam: Your Final Portfolio is due at this time: _____

Your portfolios are due at this time. If you would like them mailed to you over the break, please provide a SASE 9x14 envelope. You’ll need about \$4.00 in postage. Otherwise, you may pick up your portfolios once the spring semester begins.

Learning to write is a simple process: read something, then write something; read something else, then write something else. And show in your writing what you have read. —From Marvin Bell’s “52 Statements About Poetry”

